PARASHURAMA



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AMAR CHITRA KATHA



THE SIXTH INCARNATION OF LORD VISHNU

Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is one of the immortals of Hindu mythology. It is in this incarnation that we encounter for the first time the emergence of a mature, well-developed human character. Because the first four incarnations belonged to non-human species and the fifth was a mere slip of a boy.

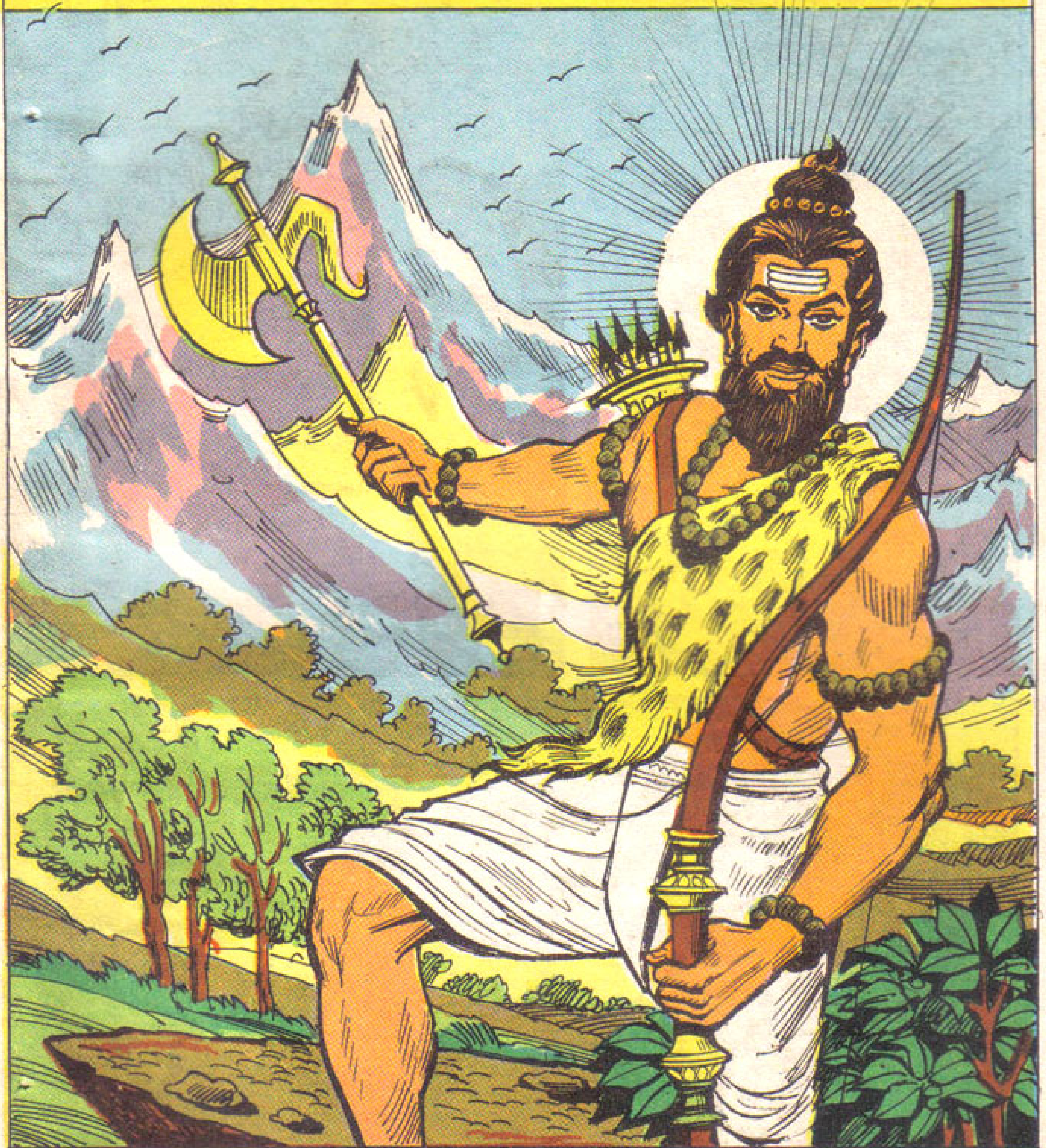
Parashurama in many ways is paradoxical. He loved his mother dearly and yet he slew her without a moment's hesitation. He was born a Brahman but he was a better soldier than any Kshatriya and went on to annihilate the Kshatriyas in the battlefield. Though born in a family of hermits, Parashurama was a man of action. His love of action took him into the eras of Rama and Krishna. Thus this is the only incarnation to step out of the confines of its own times.

Parashurama is the patron God of the land that stretches in between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea on the West Coast of India. People there believe that his powerful axe reclaimed the land for them from the depths of the ocean.

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Editor: Anant Pai Retold by: Kamala Chandrakant Artwork: Madhu Powle

PARASHURAMA

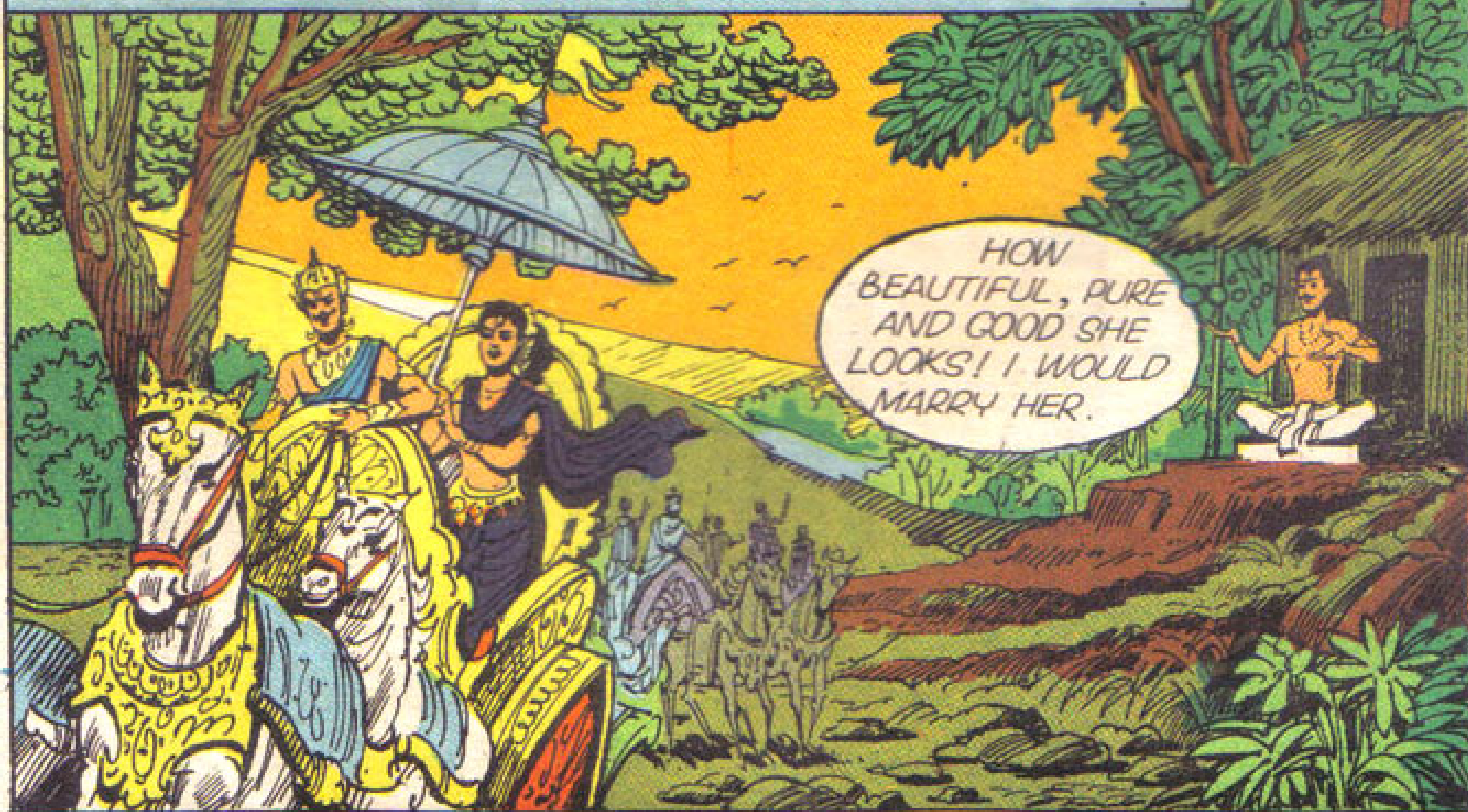


PARASHURAMA WAS BORN THE SON OF RISHI JAMADAGNI AND RENUKA. BUT IT WAS A BIRTH UNDER STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES.

HIS GREAT-GRANDFATHER, GADHI, WAS A GOOD KING.







HE WENT TO HER FATHER.

I HAVE COME TO YOU SEEKING YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND.

I AM HONOURED, GREAT SAGE. BUT...

...YOU WILL HAVE TO BRING A DOWRY OF 1000 BROWN HORSES. IT IS THE CUSTOM IN OUR FAMILY.

CAN YOU?

IS THAT ALL? IT SHOULD NOT BE VERY DIFFICULT.

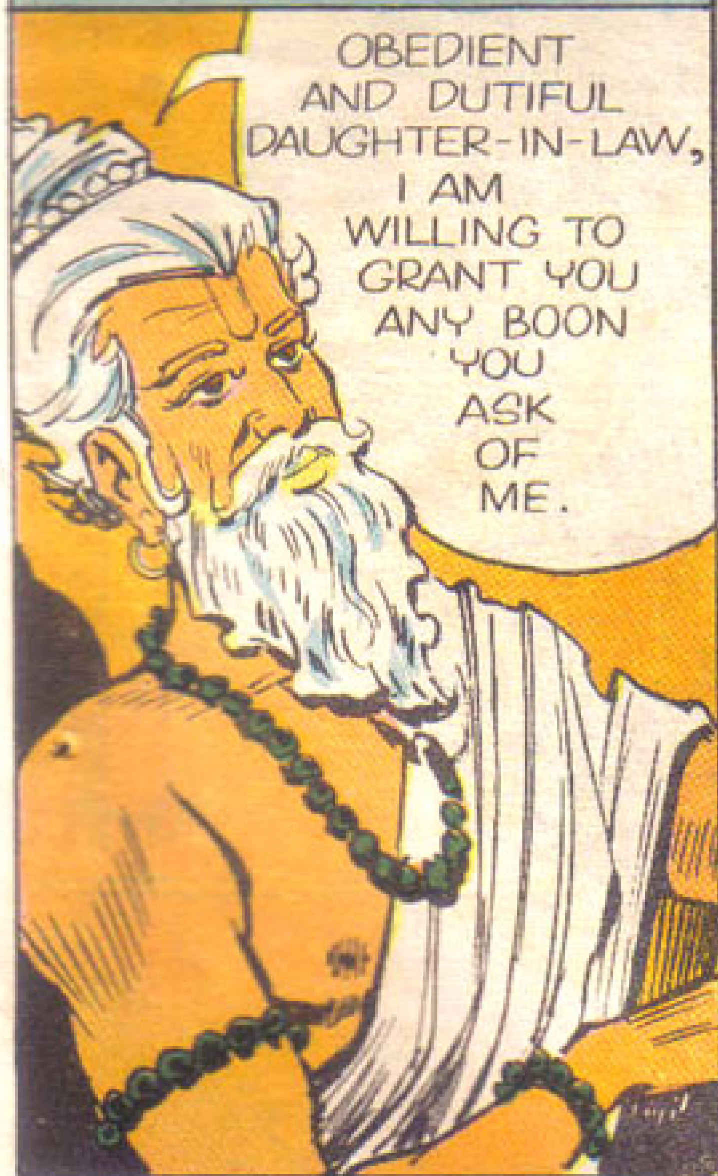
SO RICHIKA GAVE GADHI THE THOUSAND BROWN HORSES...

...AND WAS MARRIED TO SATYAVATI.

ONE DAY BHRIGU CAME TO VISIT HIS SON AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

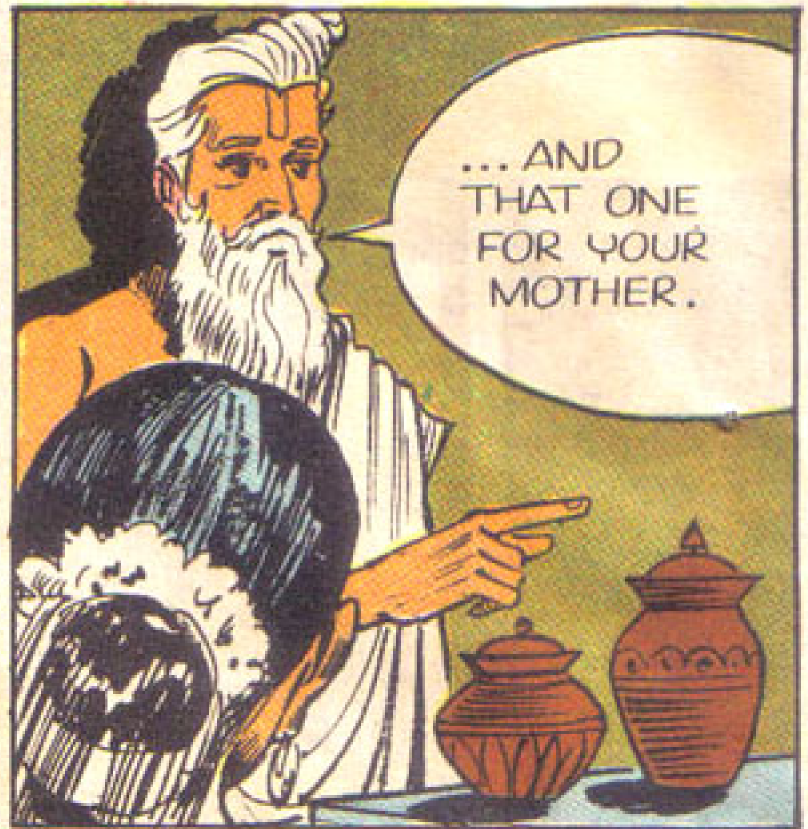

THEY LOOKED AFTER HIS NEEDS WITH AFFECTION.


I AM INDEED FORTUNATE IN MY CHILDREN.

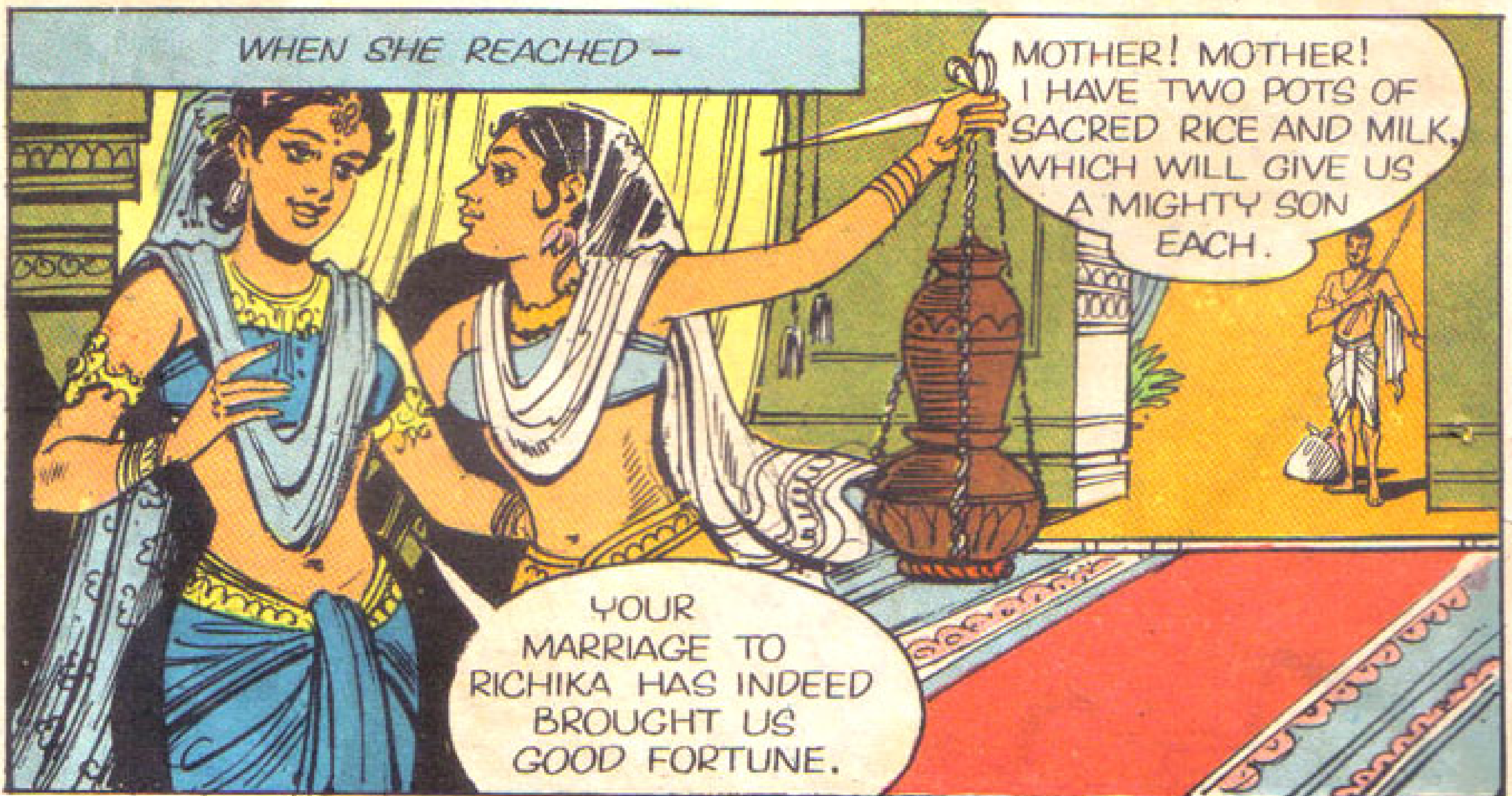

BHRIGU WAS PLEASED.
OBEDIENT AND DUTIFUL DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, I AM WILLING TO GRANT YOU ANY BOON YOU ASK OF ME.


FATHER, GIVE ME A SON AND A BROTHER.
YOU SHALL HAVE BOTH.


THEN HE TOOK SATYAVATI ASIDE.
HERE ARE TWO POTS OF SACRED RICE AND MILK. THIS ONE IS FOR YOU...

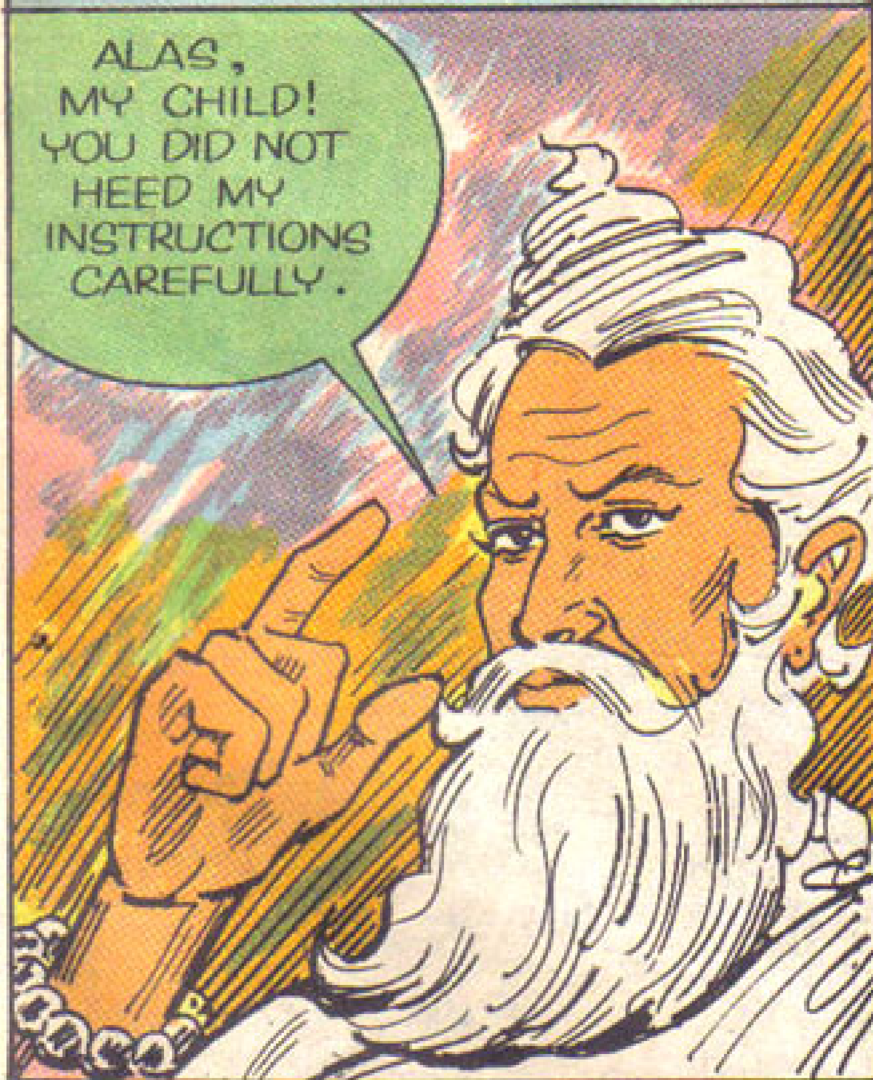

...AND THAT ONE FOR YOUR MOTHER.


WHEN BHRIGU LEFT, SATYAVATI PICKED THE POTS AND ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND WENT TO HER MOTHER.


WHEN SHE REACHED –
MOTHER! MOTHER! I HAVE TWO POTS OF SACRED RICE AND MILK, WHICH WILL GIVE US A MIGHTY SON EACH.
YOUR MARRIAGE TO RICHIKA HAS INDEED BROUGHT US GOOD FORTUNE.


BUT HER MOTHER TOOK THE POT MEANT FOR SATYAVATI AND...


...SATYAVATI TOOK THE ONE MEANT FOR HER MOTHER.


SAGE BHRIGU IN HIS SPIRITUAL VISION SAW THE EXCHANGE.
ALAS, MY CHILD! YOU DID NOT HEED MY INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.


NOW, YOUR MOTHER'S SON THOUGH A KSHATRIYA, WILL TAKE TO THE LIFE OF AN ASCETIC.



SATYAVATI BEGAN PLEADING WITH BHRIGU.



BHRIGU WAS MOVED BY HER ENTREATIES.



IN DUE TIME SATYAVATI HAD A SON.

WE SHALL CALL HIM JAMDAGNI.

AS JAMADAGNI GREW UP, HIS DEVOTION TO THE STUDY OF THE VEDAS ALSO INCREASED AND HE SOON MASTERED THEM.



SO HE MARRIED THE CHASTE RENUKA.



MOST OF THE KSHATRIYAS OF THOSE DAYS WERE VICIOUS. THEY WERE BECOMING A MENACE AND A BURDEN TO MOTHER EARTH. THE WORST OF THEM WAS KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA, THE 1000-ARMED KING OF THE HAIHAYA TRIBE.

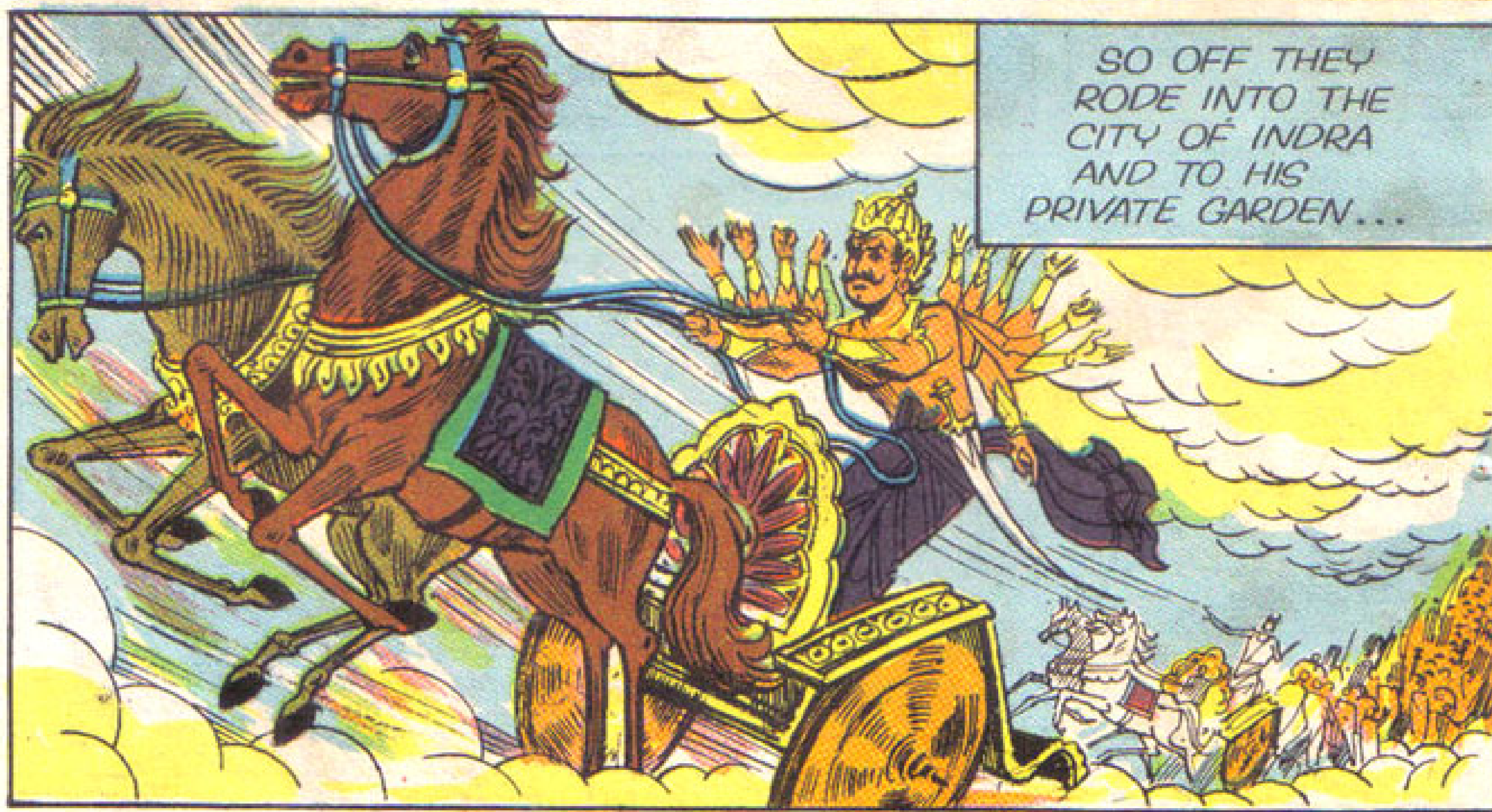


MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN TREMBLED WITH FEAR WHENEVER KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA RODE INTO A CITY IN HIS INVINCIBLE GOLDEN CHARIOT.

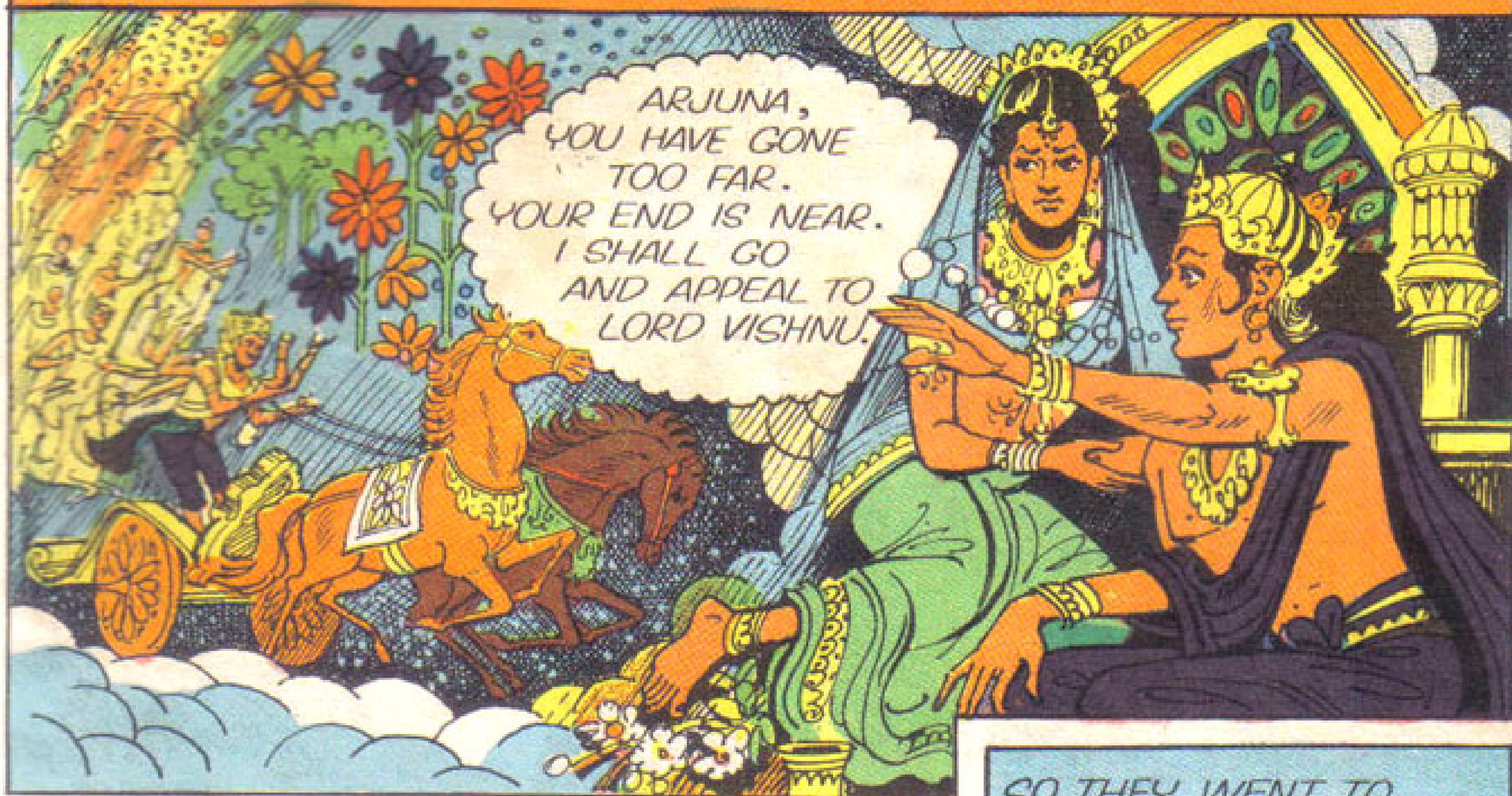



HA! HA! MY GOOD MEN, TAKE WHAT PLEASES YOU AND BURN THE REST.


SUDDENLY HE HAD AN IDEA.
WHY WASTE OUR TIME HERE WITH THESE PUNY MORTALS. LET US RIDE INTO THE CITY OF INDRA, KING OF THE GODS.


SO OFF THEY RODE INTO THE CITY OF INDRA AND TO HIS PRIVATE GARDEN...

...WHERE INDRA WAS RESTING WITH HIS WIFE, SACHI.



IN THE MEANWHILE, THE SAINTS AND SAGES OF THE DAY COULD NO LONGER BEAR THE VIOLATIONS OF THEIR PENANCES AND SACRIFICES BY KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA.



SO THEY WENT TO LORD VISHNU.





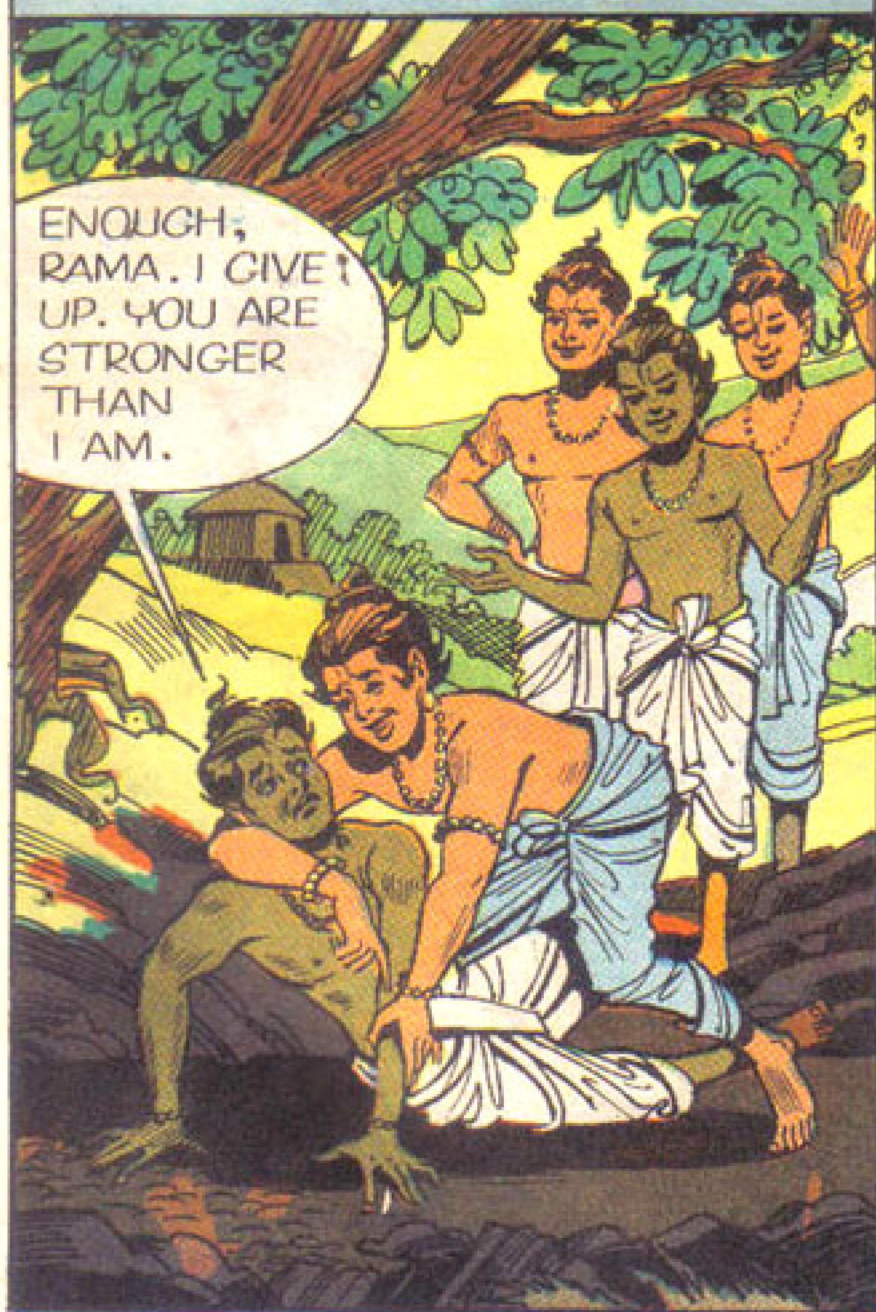


MEANWHILE FIVE SONS WERE BORN TO RENUKA AND JAMADAGNI.

THE FIFTH AND YOUNGEST WAS RAMA WHO WAS REALLY VISHNU REBORN TO FULFIL HIS PROMISE TO INDRA AND THE SAGES.



AS A CHILD RAMA WAS FOND OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE AND...



...PLAYING WITH WEAPONS.



RAMA SOON GREW UP INTO A STURDY YOUTH. ONE DAY–



RAMA WENT AND SAT IN MEDITATION AND UNDERWENT SEVERE PENANCES.



AT LAST SHIVA APPEARED TO HIM.

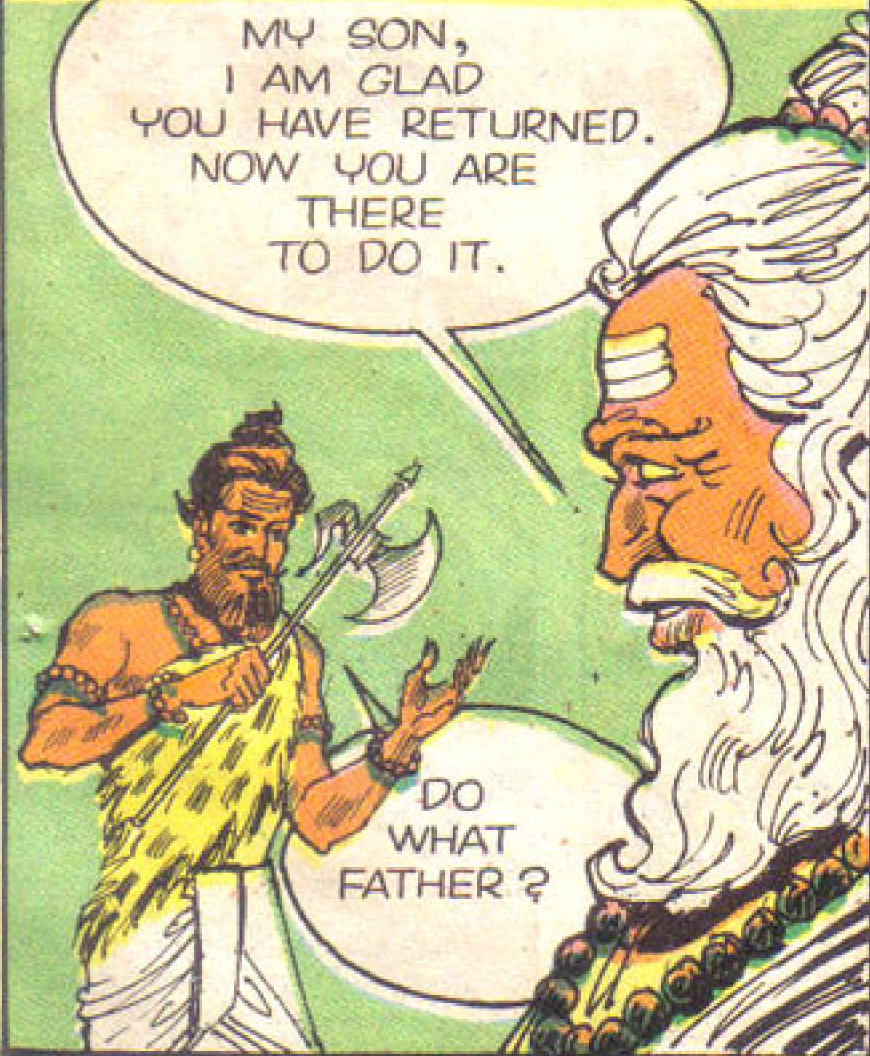


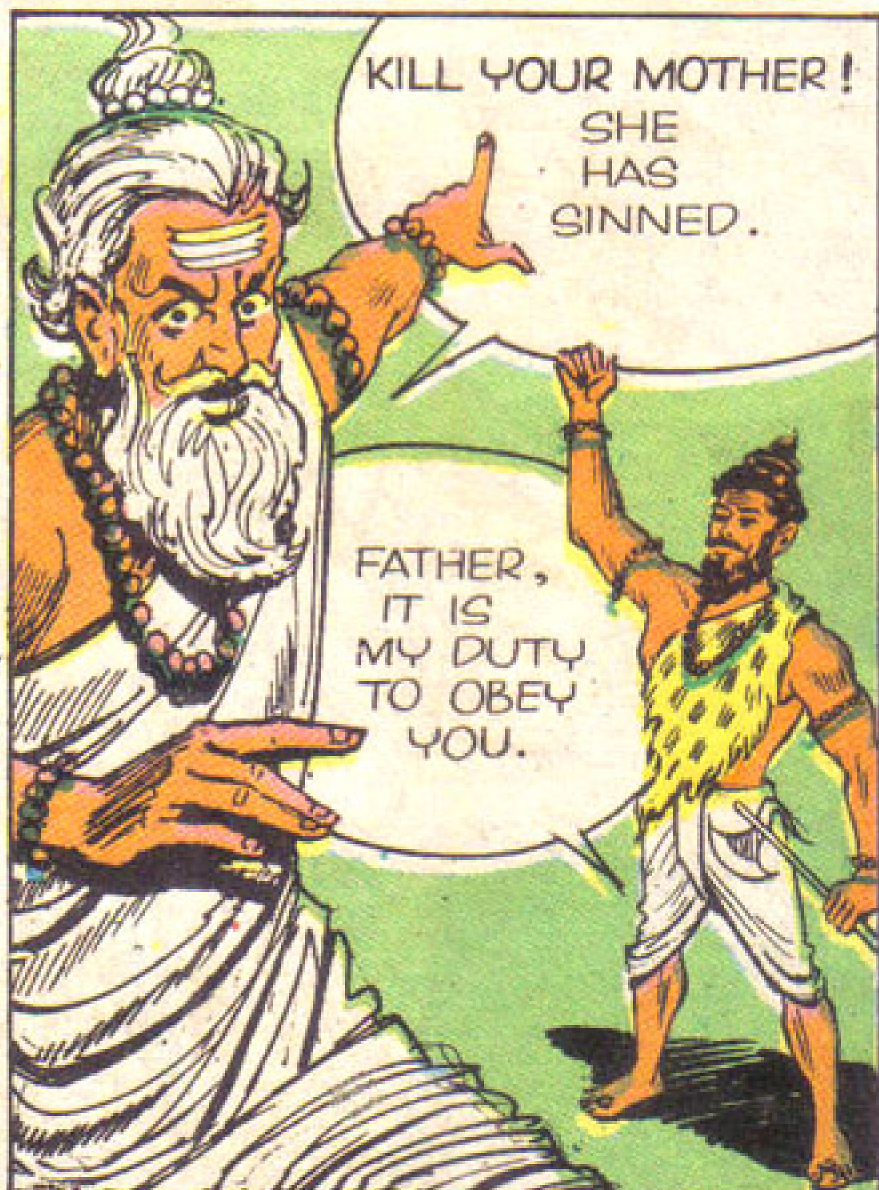
I HAVE SET MY HEART ON THE FIERY AXE, THE POWERFUL PARASHU.

AS YOU DESERVE, YOU SHALL HAVE IT. NO WARRIOR ON EARTH SHALL SURPASS YOU.

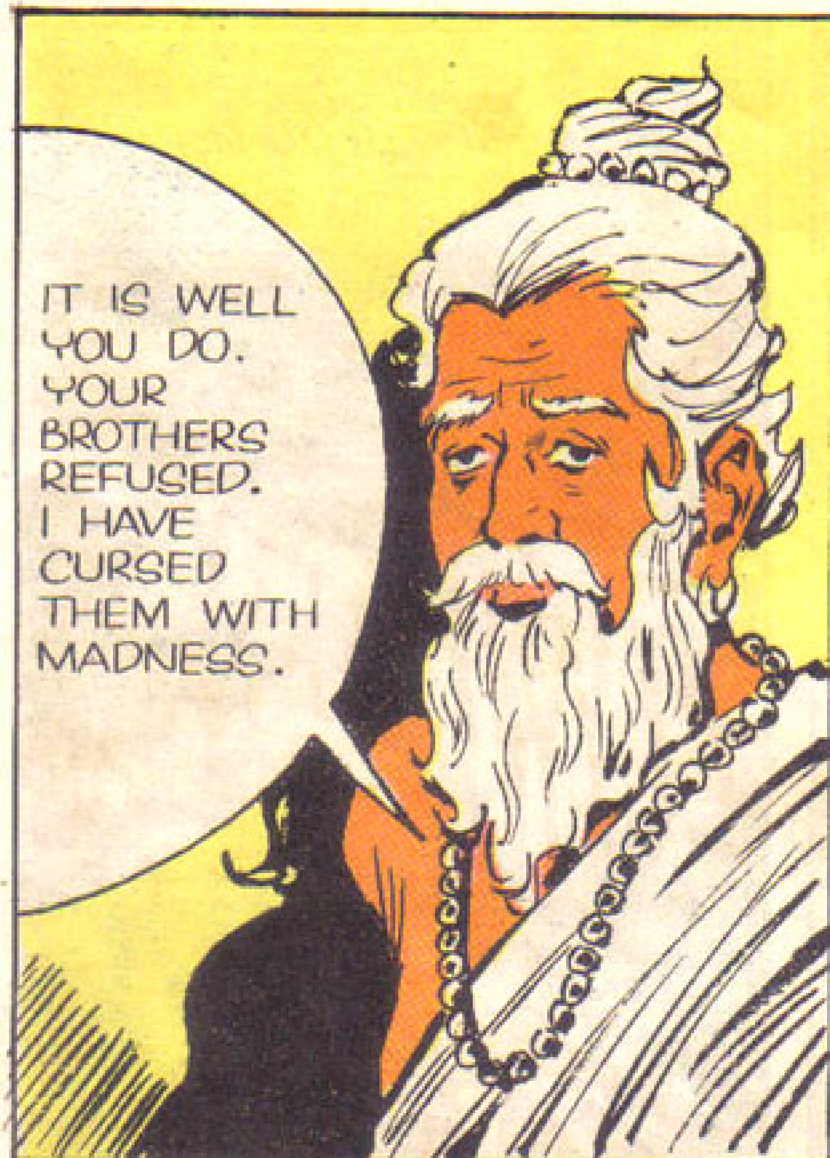






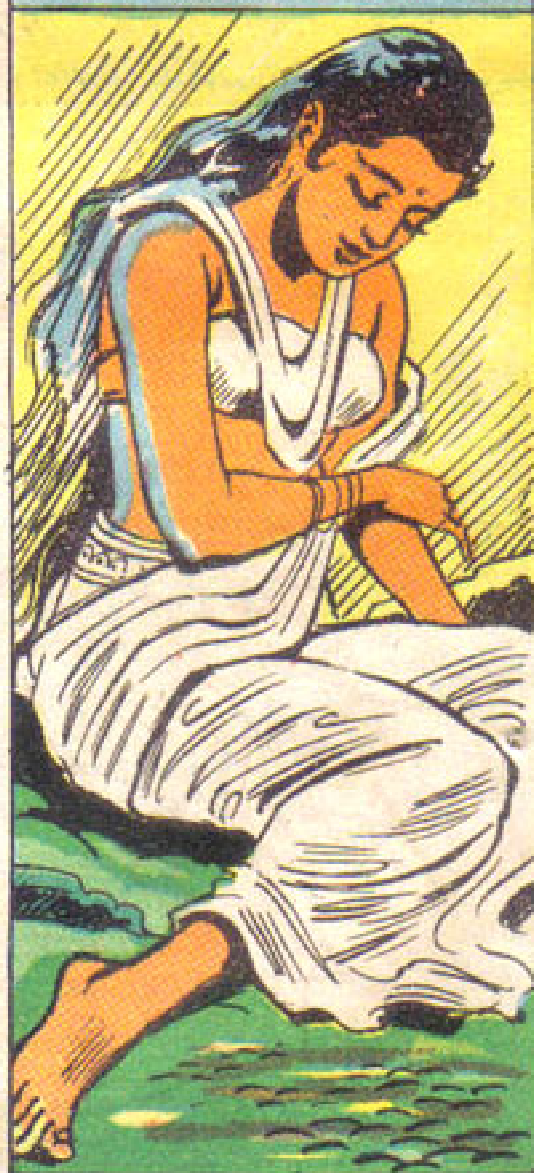


*RAMA OF THE AXE.

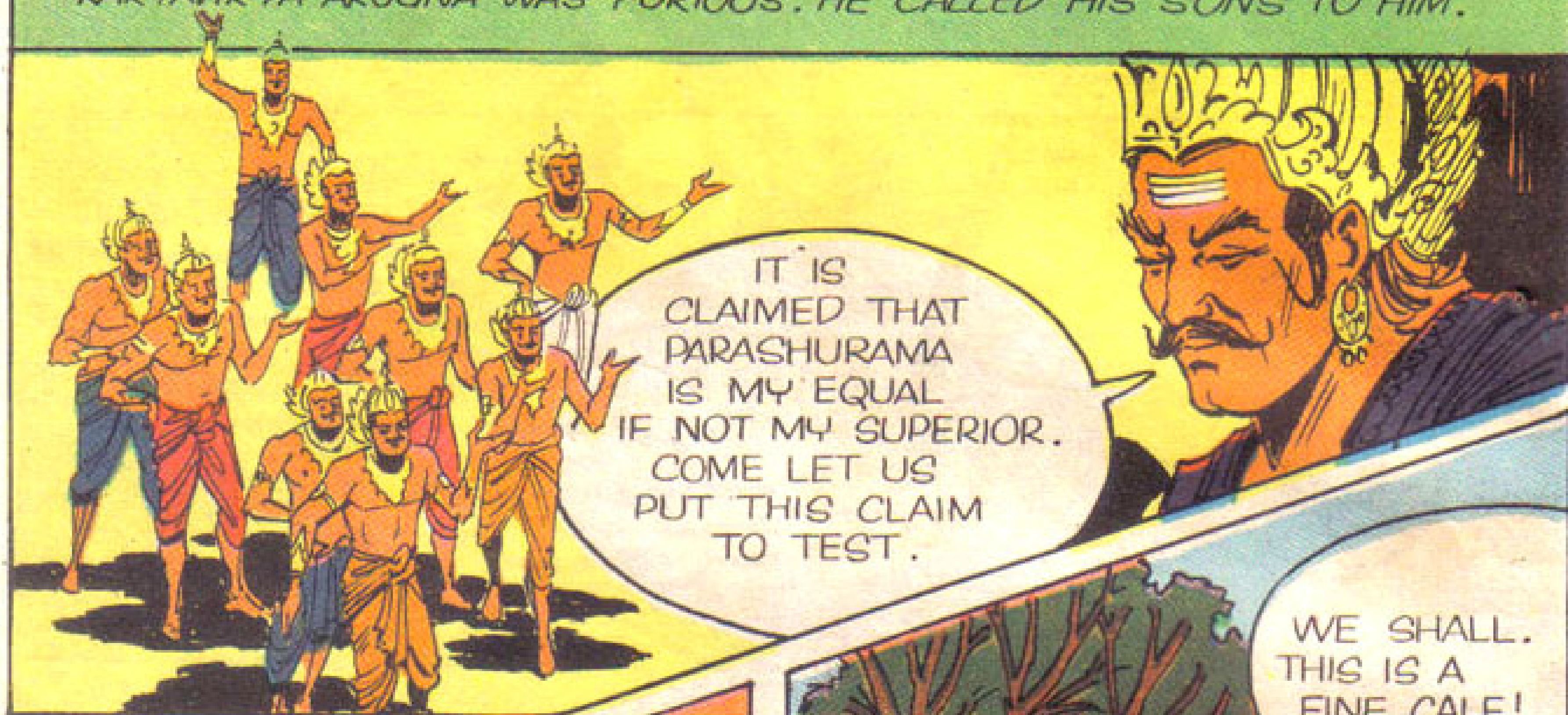

IT IS WELL YOU DO. YOUR BROTHERS REFUSED. I HAVE CURSED THEM WITH MADNESS.


PARASHURAMA, WITH ONE BLOW OF HIS AXE, KILLED HIS MOTHER.
YOUR UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE PLEASES ME. ASK ANY BOON AND IT SHALL BE YOURS.

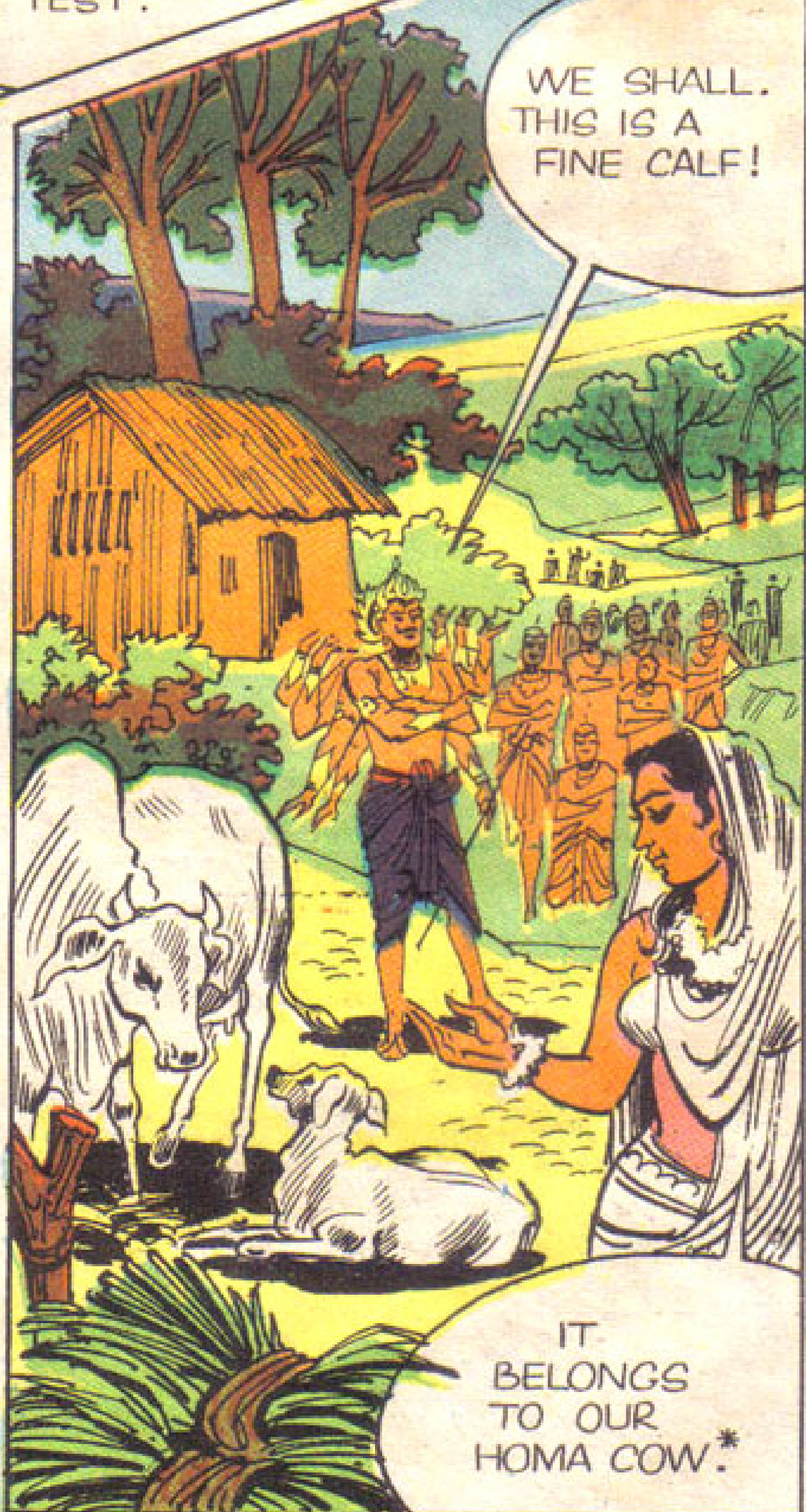

THIS WAS WHAT PARASHURAMA WAS WAITING FOR.
RESTORE MY MOTHER'S LIFE AND LOVE HER AS BEFORE. GIVE MY BROTHERS BACK THEIR SENSES. AND GIVE ME EVERLASTING LIFE.
EXACTLY AS I HAD FORESEEN!
SO BE IT.


JAMADAGNI WAS ONLY TOO GLAD TO GRANT HIM HIS BOONS.


MEANWHILE KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA CONTINUED IN HIS TYRANNY. ONE DAY WHILE PACING ARROGANTLY ON THE SEASHORE, HE BEGAN SHOOTING ARROWS INTO THE WATERS OF THE OCEAN.
A VOICE FROM THE OCEAN STOPPED HIM.
PLEASE DO NOT HARM THE CREATURES THAT LIVE WITHIN ME. I SHALL DO WHAT-EVER YOU ASK OF ME BUT PLEASE SPARE THEM.
I WILL IF YOU ANSWER THIS QUESTION. IS THERE A MAN WHO CAN RIVAL ME ?
YES. PARASHURAMA, THE SON OF JAMADAGNI. HE IS MORE THAN YOUR EQUAL.

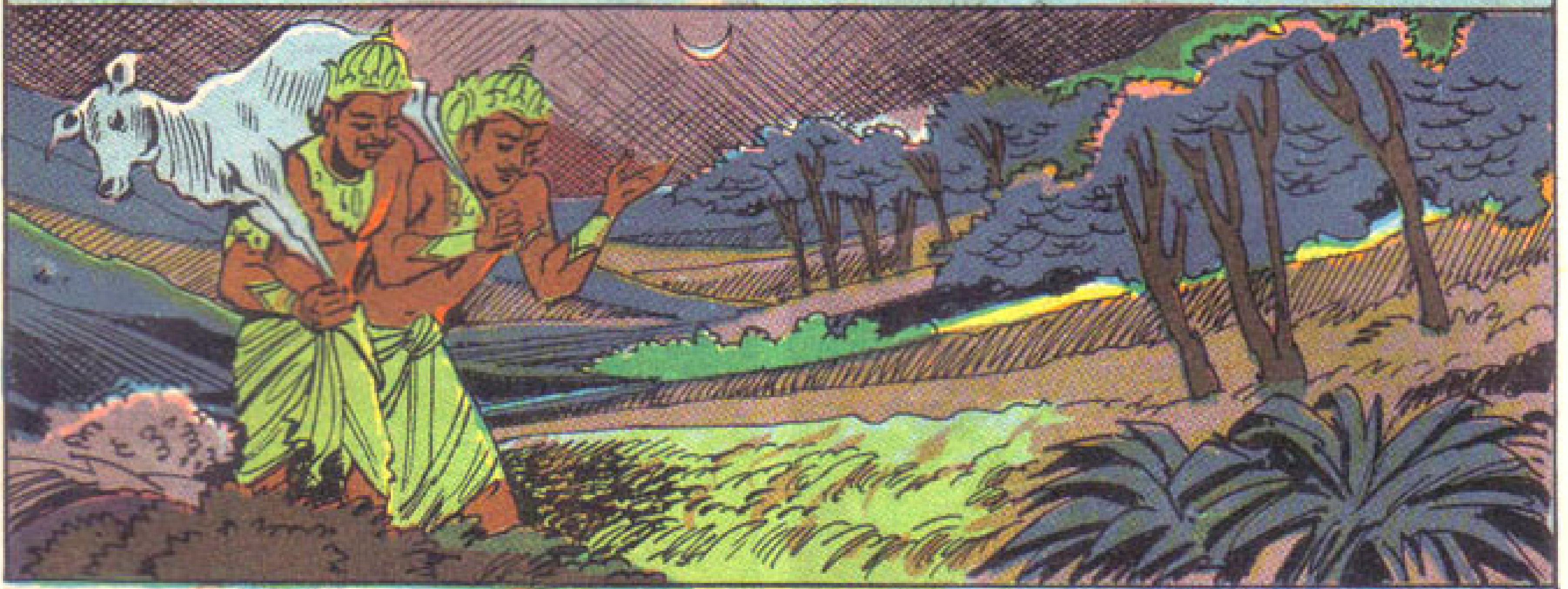






*THE MILK OF THE HOMA COW IS USED FOR SACRIFICES ETC.

THAT NIGHT THE SONS OF ARJUNA STOLE THE CALF AND MADE OFF WITH IT.

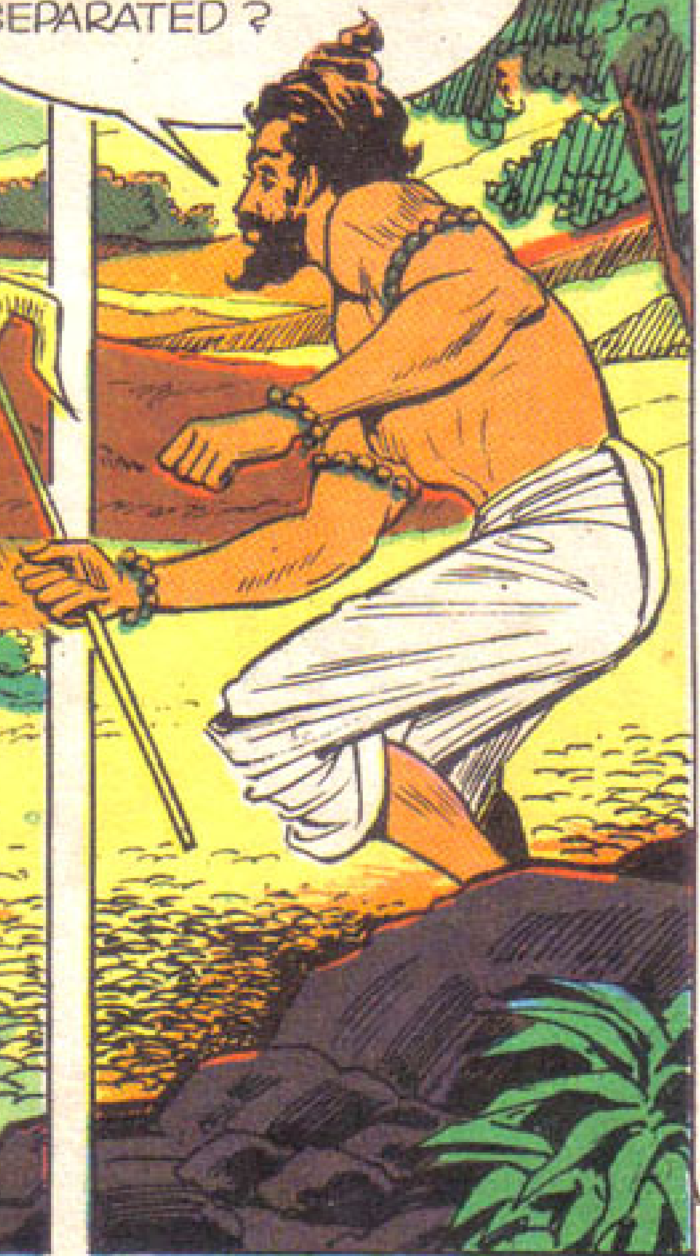


IN THE MORNING WHEN JAMADAGNI CAME OUT OF THE ASHRAM —

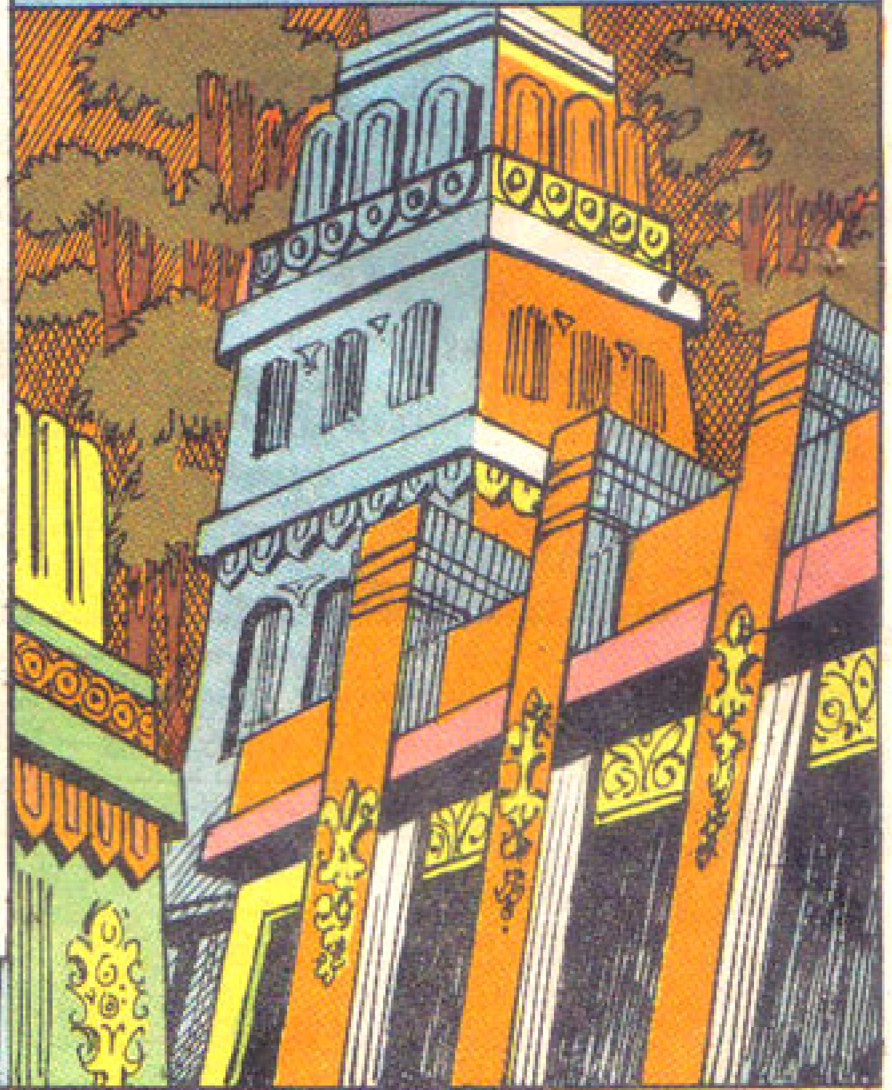
ALAS! KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA HAS REPAID OUR HOSPITALITY BY STEALING YOUR CALF. —

JUST THEN PARASHURAMA RETURNED. HE SAW THEM.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HER, FATHER? WHY IS SHE SO SAD? WHERE IS HER CALF? WHY ARE THEY SEPARATED?




JAMADAGNI TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY.
I SHALL KILL HIM AND REDEEM YOUR CALF!

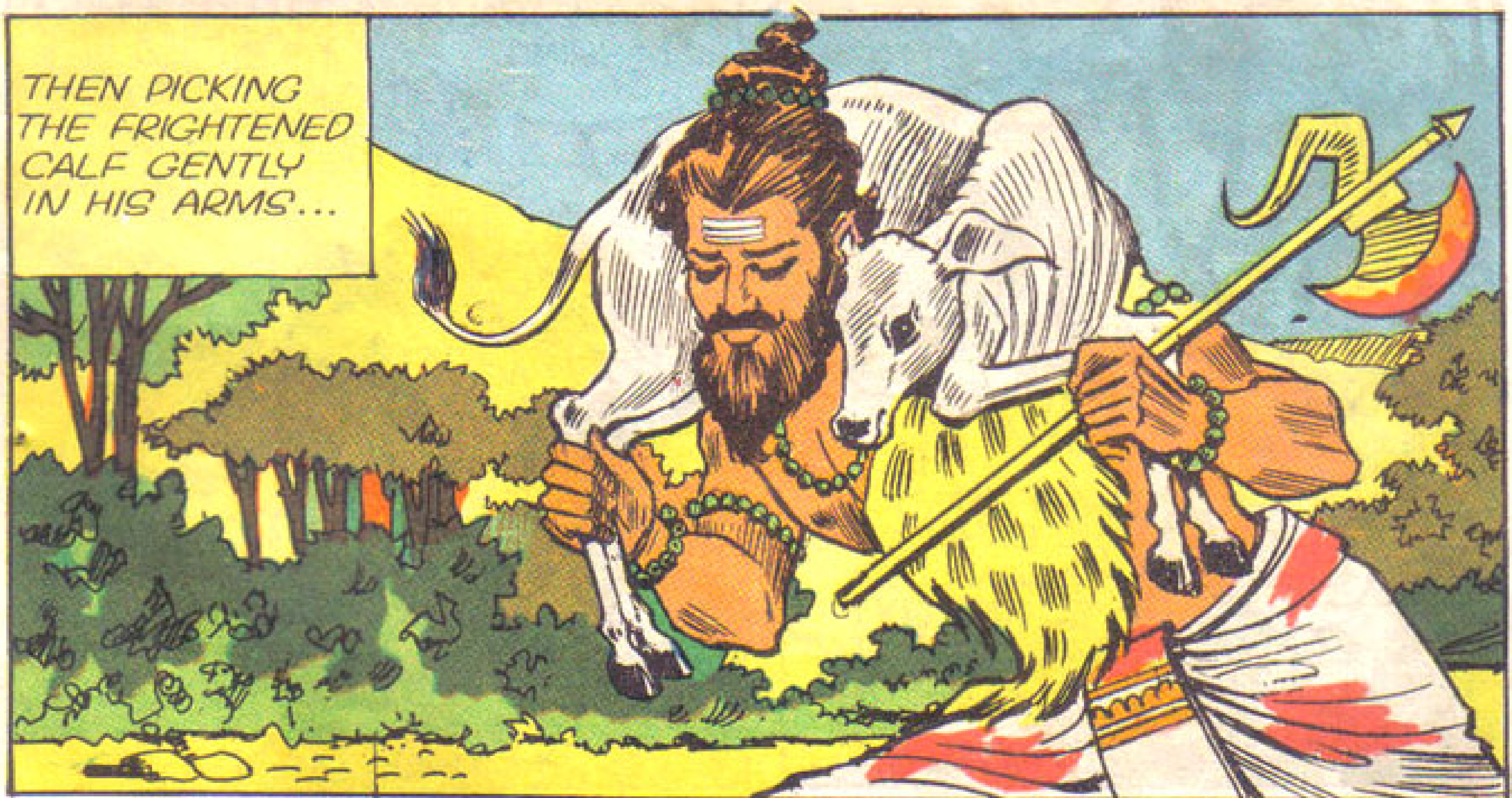

THEN PARASHURAMA TOOK HIS AXE AND RUSHED TO THE PALACE OF KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA.




WHEN HE SAW THE HELPLES'S CALF, HE COULD NOT CONTROL HIS ANGER. HE RUSHED INTO KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA'S BEDROOM.


A DREADFUL COMBAT ENSUED IN WHICH PARASHURAMA HACKED OFF EACH ONE OF KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA'S THOUSAND ARMS AND...


...SLEW HIM.


THEN PICKING THE FRIGHTENED CALF GENTLY IN HIS ARMS...

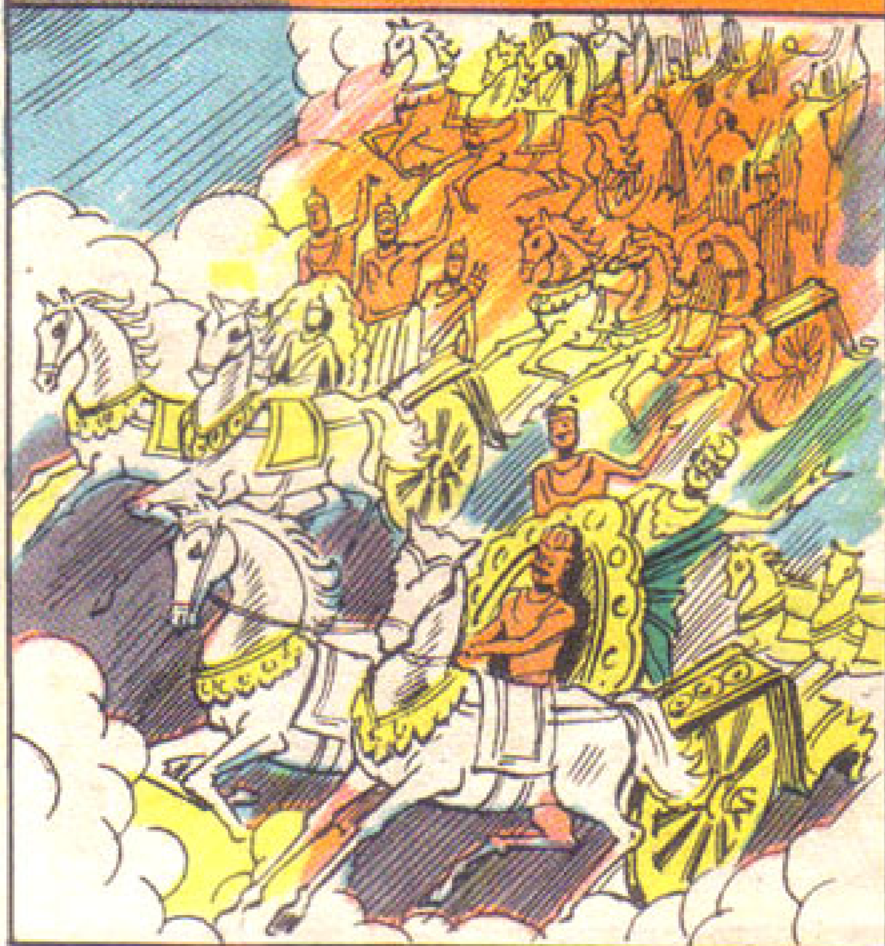

...HE MADE HIS WAY BACK TO HIS FATHER'S ASHRAM.
FATHER! FATHER! I HAVE KILLED HIM, THE VILLAIN WHO STOLE OUR INNOCENT CALF.


THEN THEY WENT TO THE COW AND –
GENTLE MOTHER, I HAVE BROUGHT BACK YOUR CALF FOR YOU.


PARASHURAMA, I AM PROUD OF YOU.
THE FIREWOOD IS EXHAUSTED. I SHALL GO TO THE FOREST AND CUT SOME FOR YOU.


IN THE MEANWHILE –
ALAS! HE IS DEAD AND THE CALF IS MISSING.
NONE OTHER THAN PARASHURAMA COULD BE THE MURDERER.





WHEN THEY REACHED THE ASHRAM, JAMADAGNI WAS DEEP IN MEDITATION.

PARASHURAMA IS NOT TO BE SEEN ANYWHERE.

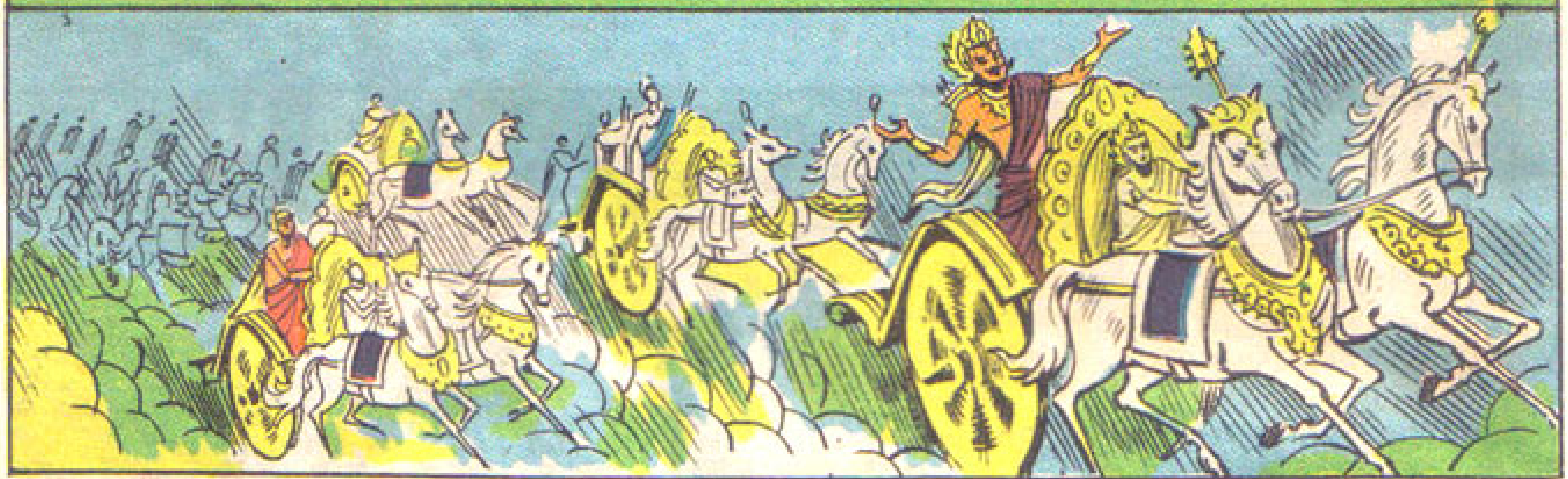
LET US KILL HIS FATHER THEN.

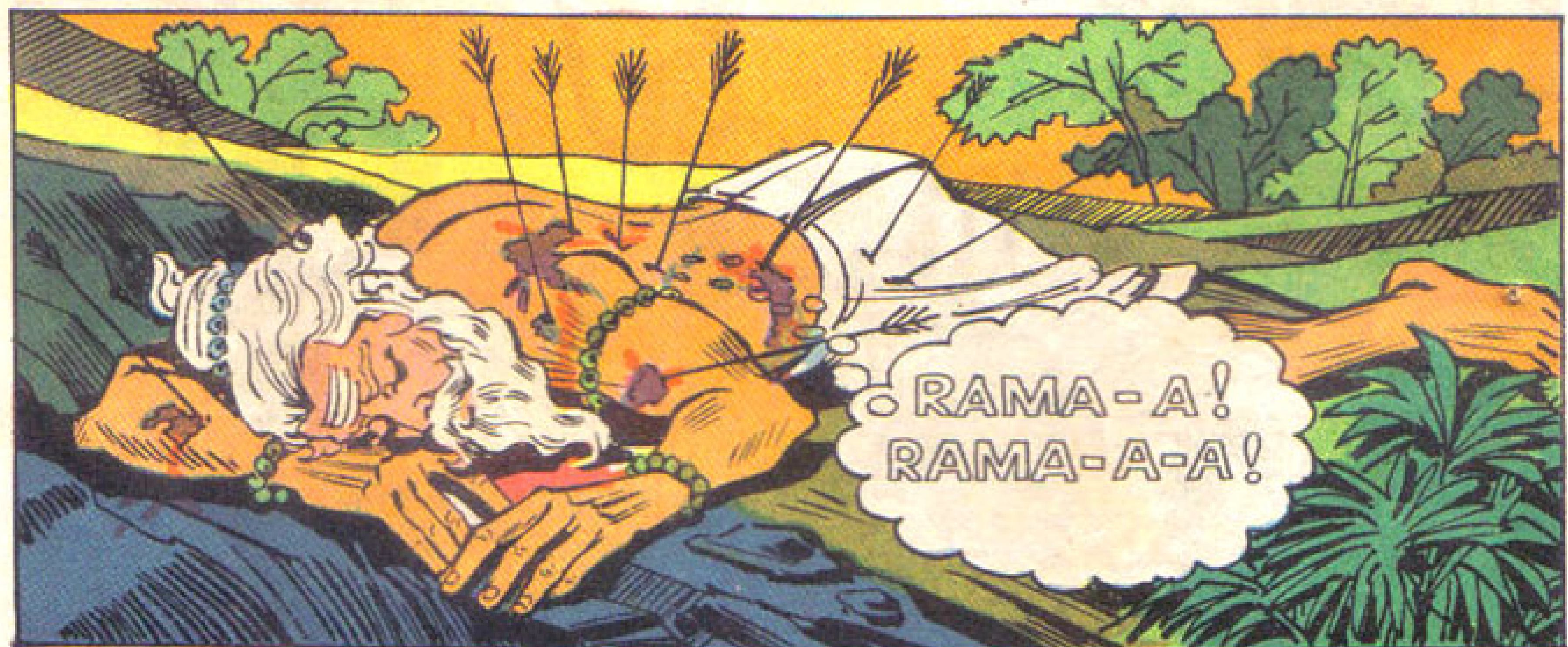
THAT'S RIGHT. HE KILLED OUR FATHER. DIDN'T HE?

THEY ATTACKED JAMADAGNI AND SHOT ARROWS AT HIM FROM ALL DIRECTIONS.



THEY LEFT HIM DYING AND RODE AWAY.





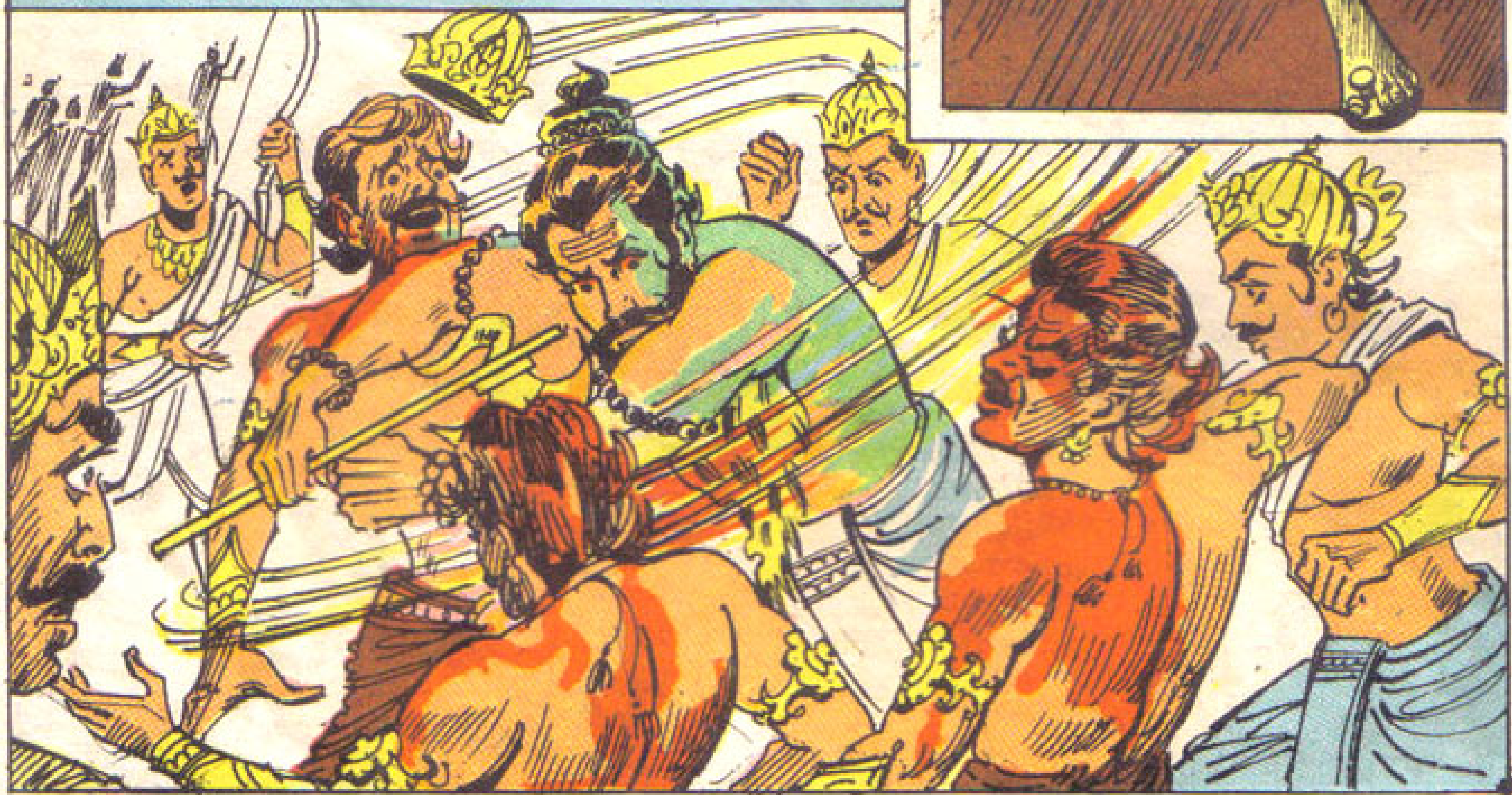
JUST THEN PARASHURAMA RETURNED FROM THE FOREST.

FATHER! FATHER! IT IS MY FAULT THAT YOU HAVE BEEN SHOT DOWN LIKE A STAG BY THE MERCILESS ARROWS OF THE MEAN SONS OF ARJUNA.

WITH WHAT FACE WILL THEY RETURN TO THEIR FRIENDS AND SERVANTS AFTER COMMITTING SUCH A HEINOUS CRIME ?

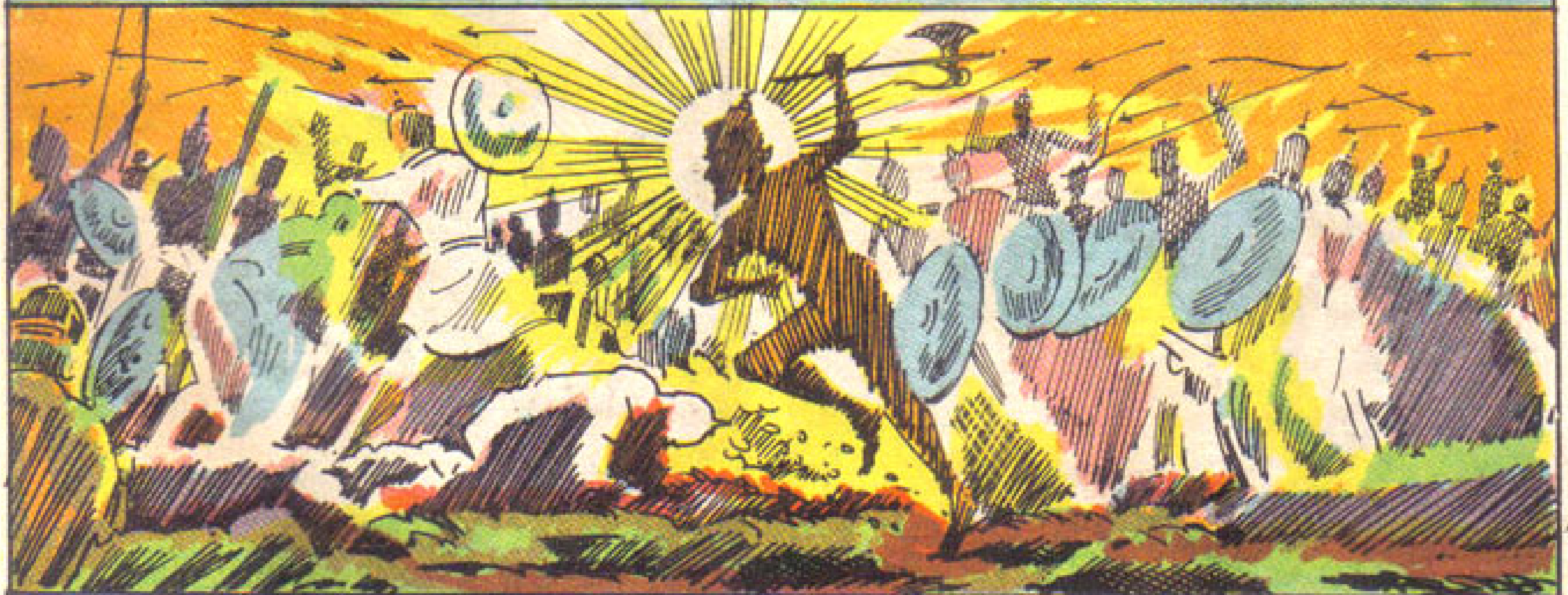

AS PARASHURAMA CREMATED HIS FATHER'S BODY, HE TOOK A VOW.
I SHALL NOT REST, DEAR FATHER, TILL I HAVE WIPED OUT THE ENTIRE MARTIAL RACE OF THE KSHATRIYAS.


WHEN THE LAST EMBERS DIED OUT, HE RAISED HIS AXE AND BEGAN HIS SELF-IMPOSED TASK.


KARTAVIRYA ARJUNA'S SONS WERE THE FIRST TO BE WIPED OUT.


THEN ONE BY ONE HE MASSACRED ALL THE KSHATRIYAS ON EARTH.


BUT EACH TIME HE KILLED ONE LOT, THEIR SONS WOULD SPRING UP.
I SHALL FIGHT TILL NOT A SINGLE ONE OF YOU IS LEFT. MY FATHER HAS GRANTED ME EVERLASTING LIFE.


THUS PARASHURAMA PATIENTLY CONTINUED WIPING OUT TWENTY-ONE GENERATIONS OF KSHATRIYAS.

BUT ALAS! HE KILLED WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION BOTH THE EVIL AND THE GOOD KSHATRIYAS.



BUT PARASHURAMA WAS RELENTLESS.



SOON THERE WERE NO STRONG GOOD MEN TO PROTECT THE GOOD ON EARTH.



MOTHER EARTH FELT THAT IT WAS TIME TO INTERVENE.



SO MOTHER EARTH WENT TO KASHYAPA.

LORD PARASHURAMA'S WORK IS OVER. I AM RELIEVED OF MY BURDEN. PLEASE STOP HIM NOW.

I WILL SPEAK TO THE SPIRITS OF HIS ANCESTORS.

KASHYAPA BY HIS SPIRITUAL POWERS, CALLED FORTH THE SPIRIT OF RICHIKA.

PARASHURAMA'S MISSION IS OVER. IT IS NOW TIME FOR HIM TO DESIST.

SO SHALL IT BE. HE WILL OBEY HIS ANCESTORS.

AND RICHIKA KEPT HIS PROMISE. WHEN PARASHURAMA WAS ABOUT TO RAISE HIS AXE ON A KING OF THE TWENTY-SECOND GENERATION OF KSHATRIYAS —

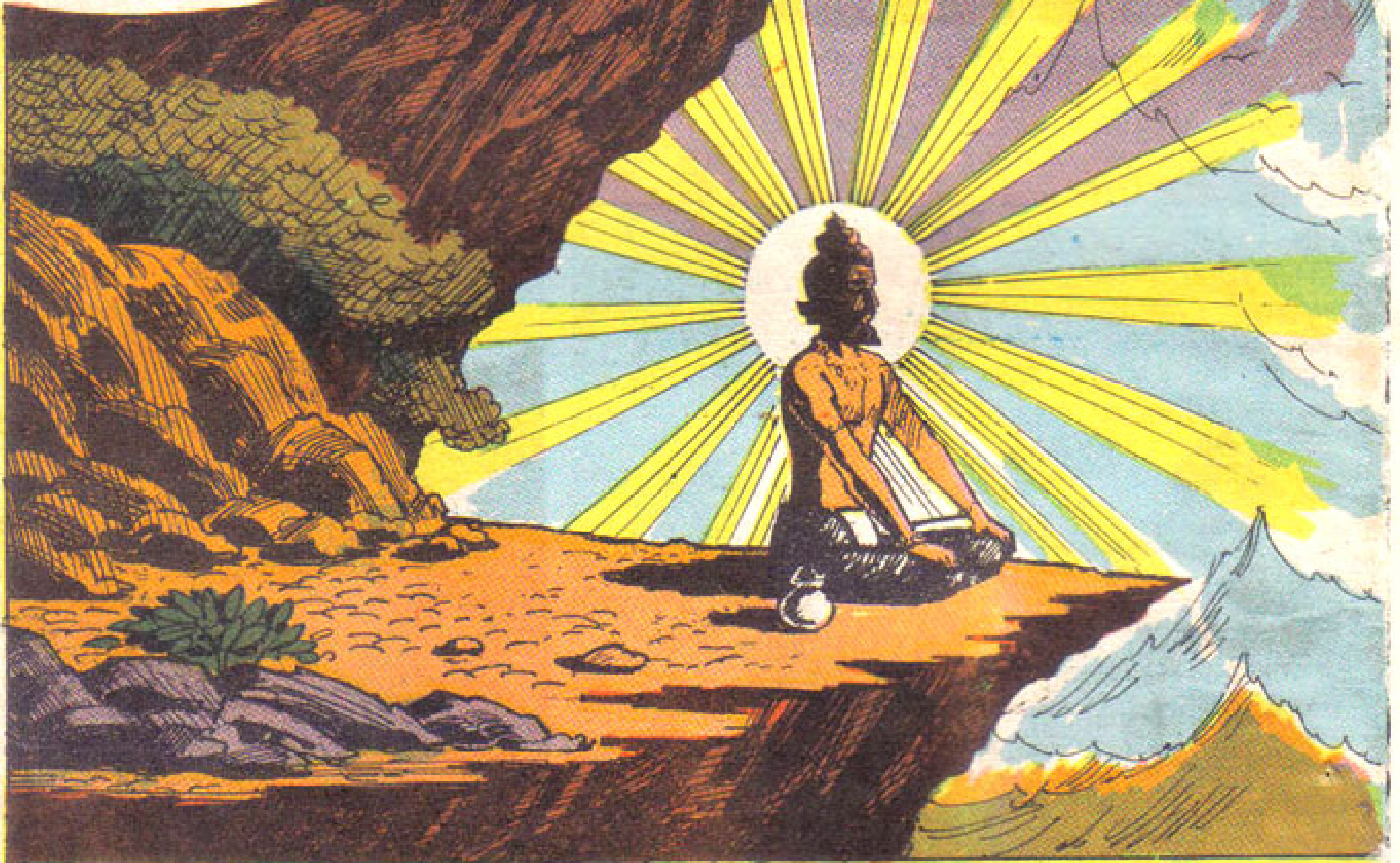
PARASHURAMA THEN HELD A GREAT SACRIFICE WHERE HE DISTRIBUTED ALL HIS WEALTH TO THE BRAHMANAS.

AFTER EVERYTHING HAD BEEN GIVEN AWAY, DRONA, THE SON OF SAGE BHARADWAJ, CAME TO HIM.

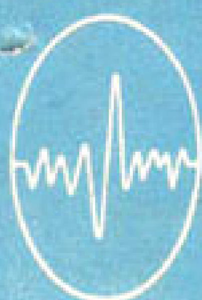




SO PARASHURAMA GAVE DRONA ALL HIS WEAPONS AND INITIATED HIM INTO THE MYSTERIES OF THEIR USE. DRONA BECAME UNEQUALLED AMONG MEN FOR HIS PROWESS IN THE SCIENCE OF ARMS.



AND PARASHURAMA, HAVING THUS RID HIMSELF OF ALL HIS WORLDLY BURDENS, RETIRED TO THE CRESTS IN THE MAHENDRA MOUNTAINS TO SPEND THE REST OF HIS DAYS, ENGAGED IN PRACTISING THE SEVEREST OF PENANCES.



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